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ABSTRACT

To help high school students learn first-hand about county and local government, educators in New York state developed a community internship program. The program stressed frequent discussions between students and officials to review meetings they had attended and to assess student progress on journals of local government activities, community study projects, and seminars with other interns. Teachers and/or representatives from agencies sponsoring internship programs began by contacting potential advisory committee members and local public officials. Advisory committee members then coordinated organizational matters such as scheduling internship activities, arranging release time, determining program costs, working with schools, obtaining formal approval, selecting students, arranging credit, and planning orientation sessions. Orientation sessions concentrated on background information about the county or municipality and program requirements and responsibilities. Projects on which interns worked included conducting research on current issues, polling constituents, responding to public questions and requests, and writing a constituent newsletter. Feedback from interns who participated in the program indicated that students became better informed about the workings of local government, enjoyed working directly with public officials, and gained exposure to career possibilities in local government. (DB)

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High School Interns in Local Government

by Barbara M. Sagan
A 4-H Community Development Project

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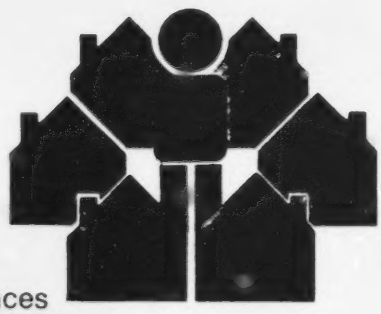

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This handbook was prepared by Barbara M. Sagan. It is based on her work with Stephen F. Hamilton on the 4-H Community Development Pilot Program in Cortland County in 1974 and 1975.

Introduction

This handbook is written for Cooperative Extension personnel, teachers, youth workers, and local officials who are interested in helping high school students learn first-hand about county and local government by serving as interns to public officials in their communities. It discusses the value of teaching local government to teenagers and describes both steps in the planning process and the components of a good intern program. A list of supporting resources and materials is provided at the end.

Because it is unlikely that the sequence of steps for developing an intern program will be the same for any two communities, the information presented here cannot pretend to be all-inclusive. The structure and function of the units of government in New York State (county, city, town, village) may be generally uniform, but the power structure and division of responsibilities among locally elected representatives are not. Therefore, in organizing a local government internship program it is essential to have a knowledge of your own community and a familiarity with those in decision-making positions. Used with this knowledge, the handbook can help tailor an internship program to the needs and interests of officials, educators, and high school students in your community.

Why Local Government?

Local government is probably the least understood area of government in this country. Yet local decision-making bodies have a very direct and immediate effect on individuals' daily lives. In the past decade, the responsibilities and functions of local governments have been steadily increasing since federal and state governments have turned to local authorities to find solutions to problems created by rapid social and technological change. Questions about industrial growth, air and water pollution, land use, transportation, solid waste, and welfare have not only required locally elected officials to spend more time gathering information on these subjects but have also increased the number of community government jobs necessary to keep pace with these new responsibilities. The federal revenue-sharing program has added new resources to local governments. In most decisions involving federal funds, citizen involvement in project planning is required. With more and more people looking close to home for solutions to their problems, grassroots government has taken on a new spirit and momentum.

Despite the clear and increasing importance of local government, most high school courses in government concentrate on the state and federal

levels, touching only briefly on the workings of local government. This situation reflects both the unfamiliarity of many teachers with the subject matter and the inability of curriculum developers to write simply and accurately about such a diverse topic. Teaching about local government requires regionally developed materials and close collaboration between teachers and local officials.

Unlike officials in the state and federal government, adults in local decision-making positions are easily accessible to high school students. The zoning commission or county legislature can each provide a forum in which students may test theories, ask questions, and contribute opinions.

The work of active citizenship, of gathering information and taking a stand on issues, can have more immediate impact on local officials than on those at either the state or federal levels. Students can begin to develop a sense of where and how citizen involvement can make a difference in their area's government affairs. In addition, students can use the local political arena as a kind of laboratory to learn about the unit of government closest to them and to relate what they learn to the structure and process of state and federal government as well.

Why An Internship Program?

An internship program gives young people the opportunity to learn about local government by working directly with an official in their community. Students are matched with officials on a one-to-one basis. They attend a variety of meetings with the officials. In addition, the interns should keep a journal of their activities, complete a specific project assigned to them by the official, and attend special seminars in which they can share their experiences with each other and also learn about other aspects of local government. Finally, they should report back what they have learned to other students in their schools. The program allows students to observe local government in action through completing projects on particular community problems or issues and discussing their ideas with their official.

There are many benefits in having students serve as local government interns. In the first place, students have the opportunity to observe and participate in local government over an extended time period rather than just for a day. In addition, they not only become better informed on the workings of government but also gain exposure to the variety of career possibilities available in local government. Furthermore, by making local officials aware that they have a part to play in the educational process, the internship program can help to establish a stronger communication link between the school and the community. And, through interacting with student interns, local officials and other adults can become more aware of the valuable contributions young people can make when given the opportunity to participate in community affairs.

The internship program is especially valuable because it allows young people to develop a new kind of relationship with an adult in a responsible position. The student and official participate together in a working relationship that fosters in the student a self assurance in asking questions and expressing opinions.

What Is An Intern?

Internships give students the opportunity to apply and develop through participation in the actual running of their community the knowledge and skills they have been learning in school. The purpose of an internship is not to train students in a particular career field but to give them an opportunity to explore habits, styles, and attitudes toward work and to test their developing sense of identity. Student interns are not paid for their work and do not replace regular employees.[1]

From the start, it is important to emphasize that this is an educational, not a political program. Officials should not view student interns as free labor that can be used to address envelopes, do routine campaign work and the like; any "busy work" assigned to interns should be kept to a minimum. Officials should assign projects and tasks that provide interns with opportunities to learn about their own roles in government and the functions of the governmental body. Interns should be given tasks to perform that officials would normally do themselves. The student's role should be more like that of a legislative assistant than that of a clerk or secretary. In addition, officials should be willing to regularly set aside some time to discuss the interns' activities with them.

The students' commitment to the responsibilities and requirements of the program is equally important. During the course of the internship, they will sometimes attend meetings where sensitive issues are openly discussed and interns should therefore be aware that such information must remain confidential. Every care must be taken not to misrepresent the opinions and attitudes of their officials. The internship program is an opportunity for students to learn about government and should not be viewed as a forum for them to air their opinions on the operation or decisions of the local governing body.

A successful official-intern relationship requires a balanced investment of time on the part of each. That is, students should try to provide enough assistance to the public officials to compensate them for the time they spend instructing their interns. But because students know so little about local government when they become interns, this objective is not easily achieved and legislators should not place unrealistic expectations on them.

1. "Internship Programs," *National Commission on Resources for Youth Newsletter* (Vol 5, No. 2), p. 2.

Program Planning

A high school local government internship program can be sponsored by a variety of agencies and organizations such as Cooperative Extension, the Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES), individual school districts, a youth bureau, local governing bodies, or the local chapter of the League of Women Voters.

Getting Started

Internship programs will not be organized in the same way in every community. For example, county legislators in Cattaraugus County formed a committee to explore ways of informing residents about county government. As a result, the local BOCES district hired a staff member to organize and direct an internship program with the county legislature and to provide in-service training in local government for high school teachers.

In Cortland County, an internship program in the county legislature was sponsored by Cooperative Extension as a 4-H Community Development project, in cooperation with several school districts. Cooperative Extension staff in Oneida and Suffolk Counties have developed internship programs with town and village boards. A program in Chemung County is sponsored by a town youth bureau and the YMCA.

Although these programs were started in different ways and in counties that are demographically and geographically dissimilar, certain aspects of the planning process were crucial to establishing a successful program in each case.

Because the establishment of an internship program requires discussions and meetings with a variety of people in the community, enough time must be allowed for planning and organization. The planning schedule will vary depending on the size of a particular community and the number of high schools situated there, but 4 to 8 weeks should generally be sufficient.

Advisory Committee

One or two people representing the sponsoring agencies should take major responsibility for organizing the program. However, every effort should be made to include representatives from the schools, the student body, BOCES, Cooperative Extension, and local government in the planning process. This can be done by forming an advisory committee to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of an internship program and to determine how one could be organized in the community. The program organizer might select a local official interested in education, one or two high school students, a high school social studies teacher and guidance counselor, a social studies or career education curriculum director from BOCES, a representative of the school superintendent, and a member of the League of Women Voters or other civic organization to serve on this committee.

Initially, the program organizer should contact these potential committee members individually to get their reactions to the idea of an internship program and then, if there is substantial interest, a meeting should be scheduled in order to present and discuss the main components of the legislative internship program. Prior to the meeting, the program organizer could contact Cornell University (see back cover for address) about the possibility of having an experienced internship program coordinator participate in an advisory capacity. If there is a consensus that an internship program should be established in the county or municipality, some preliminary decisions should be made about how it will be organized.

Where Will Interns Work?

Will the students intern only with county legislators or will some have the opportunity to work with city, town and village board members as well? In a predominantly rural county it is advisable to begin the program at the county level since legislators there will have a wider range of responsibilities than those in town or village government. But involving city council members or non-elected government personnel in the internship program might also be considered.

Which High Schools Will Participate?

Will all or only a few county high schools participate in the initial program? If the interns will be working with county legislators, consult them about this question; many will want the high school in their district to be included.

Schedule

A decision must be made about the program's schedule. To be successful, an internship program must run long enough for the students to gain a basic understanding of the local governing process; generally, a ten-to-twelve-week period is recommended. However, because some town and village governments may only meet once a month, a longer program might be in order.

Release Time For Interns

Since attendance at regular decision-making sessions is one of the program's major requirements, it is important to consider when and how often the governmental body meets. Most city, town, and village governing bodies meet in the evenings; however, county legislative sessions are often scheduled during the day and occur twice a month. For the day sessions, arrangements must be made to have the students released from school; in this case, a recommended approach is to have the interns released from school one day a week to either attend the biweekly legislative sessions, work on their internship projects, or attend other meetings during the weeks when no regular meeting is scheduled. In those counties or municipalities where the legislative body meets in the evening, it is recommended that the interns be released from school at least a half-day twice a month to work on their projects. In any event, participating students should have some release time from school to attend meetings or to work on their projects; a minimum of two half-days a month or a maximum of one day a week would be appropriate.

Program Cost

The advisory committee must determine what the program will cost and investigate potential sources of funding. The most expensive budget item will be the salary of the program coordinator

(if that person is to be paid). Usually, the program organizer is the best qualified person for this job, but sometimes he or she may not be able to take on the added responsibility. A program coordinator should be chosen as soon as the internship program is approved by the local legislative body and the schools.

Transportation

Transportation of interns to meetings is another important consideration, depending on the size of the community and the location of the meetings, and can be a problem. It is recommended that students from the same high school make their own arrangements for transportation with the assistance of their teacher liaison and not rely solely on the program coordinator. Officials whose interns live in their district may find it convenient to drive their interns to meetings. This gives both a chance to get better acquainted and to chat about government issues. On occasions when an intern finds if impossible to get transportation to an important meeting, he or she should contact the program coordinator.

After getting the committee to agree on these and other questions, the program organizer should outline in writing the objectives of the program and procedures for implementing them.

Formal Approval

This is obviously a very important step in the planning process since the internship program cannot be started without the approval of the local governing body.

To obtain formal approval, the program organizer should work through the official who is a member of the advisory committee. If the plan calls for students to work with county legislators, the program organizer should review the proposal with the appropriate legislative committee—in most counties, the education or youth programs committee. Careful planning and a clear presentation of the program will be most effective in convincing the legislators to participate.

Before supporting the program, the committee may request a list of the high schools that want to participate. Once committee support is obtained, the program organizer should work with the committee chairperson to place the internship program on the agenda for the next meeting as a resolution to be voted on. A summary of the proposed program should be sent to each official beforehand. The program organizer should be present and prepared to answer any questions that might be asked.

Some officials might be concerned about how students would behave in meetings or about their being allowed to be at committee meetings that are unpublicized and therefore generally not attended by the public. Other officials may object to having to assume the role of teachers or question the idea of extending the educational process beyond the school building. The program organizer should be prepared to respond to these and other concerns. Some governmental bodies may not require a formal vote on the proposed internship program; minutes of the committee's discussion of the program and an announcement about the program at a regular meeting may be sufficient. In presenting the program to the appropriate body, it should be explained that officials would take an intern only on a voluntary basis.

Working With The Schools

While the proposal for the internship program is being presented to government officials, the program organizer should be discussing and arranging for its implementation with high school administrators and teachers.

A summary of the proposed program should be sent to the superintendent of schools and to the principals of each high school in the county. A meeting, organized by the school representatives on the advisory committee, should be held with these school administrators so that any of their questions can be answered. Teachers who might serve as program liaisons for their schools should also have the opportunity to participate. Again, the coordinator should have a carefully prepared outline of the program's plans and objectives ready for presentation.

Different high schools may have different methods of determining whether to participate in the program. Some may simply require the approval of the principal and social studies department head; others may require that the decision be made by the school board. The program organizer should therefore discuss the approval process individually with each principal.

Once the project has received the approval of the appropriate governmental body and each of the participating schools, procedural details should be worked out. If the program organizer is unable to fulfill the responsibility, a program coordinator should be hired for the job.

Teacher Liaison

The first task of the program coordinator is to select a teacher liaison in each high school. Although it is presumed that a member of the social studies faculty will assume this role, teachers of English or special elective courses such as economics or sociology should also be considered. A good teacher liaison should have an interest in local government and a commitment to community-based learning for young people and be willing to actively work for the internship program.

The teacher liaison is the program coordinator's link with the students, faculty, and administration in each school during the organization and operation of the program. Arrangements for releasing the students from school to attend meetings and for providing any necessary transportation should be worked out with the teacher liaison. Transportation needs will vary by school but the release time schedule specified in the program plan should be the same for all participating schools. Another important part of the teacher liaison's job is to inform other faculty about the program. Many will object to having students miss their classes if their absence isn't first justified. By communicating the program's objectives clearly to all faculty members, the teacher liaison will prevent any misunderstanding about the program and be able to help student interns and teachers find ways to make up any work missed during release time.

The teacher liaison also assists the coordinator in selecting the student interns, arranging for them to get school credit for their activities if possible, and providing opportunities for them to report what they have learned to other students and teachers in the school. In addition, liaisons should be invited to participate in the seminar sessions. But because most of the organization and planning should be done by the coordinator, the teacher liaison's job should not take a lot of time.

Selecting Students

Because interns work on a one-to-one basis with officials, it is not possible for large groups of students to participate in this kind of program. The number of students from each high school will vary and will depend on such factors as how many officials want interns, whether they require their interns to be from their district, and the location of schools within political districts. It is recommended that both junior and senior level students have the opportunity to participate in the program. Unlike juniors, many of whom must take Regents Examinations, seniors tend to have flexible schedules, because most have already completed many of their academic requirements. However, it is helpful to involve juniors in the program, too, since seniors often leave the community after graduation, taking their intern experience away with them. On the other hand, juniors who participate in the program can then take elective courses in their senior year and, by so doing, both expand their knowledge of local government and share it with other students. As seniors, these former interns can be helpful in recruiting new participants.

It is important to carefully consider the criteria for selecting student interns. Although applicants should be doing well academically, priority should not be given to students just because they are at the top of the class. The average or slightly above average student who is truly interested in local government and could participate without great academic risk could be the better candidate. Career aspirations in the fields of law or government and prior experience in campaign work or other local government activities should not be prerequisites.

Students who are interested in becoming interns are usually the ones who have jobs and are involved in student government and a wide range of extracurricular activities. Students whose time is already taken up with these commitments must realize that the intern program will require them to attend evening meetings and seminars in addition to any legislative sessions scheduled during the day. It is a program which cannot be taken lightly, and students with full schedules should not be selected unless they can make time available for the required activities.

The program coordinator should meet with each teacher liaison to discuss the selection process. Applications can be sought from either the entire junior and senior classes or from only students taking courses that relate to government—specifically, history, economics, or sociology. A one-page handout explaining the purpose and requirements of the program should be distributed to eligible students, with the time commitment required for the program emphasized (an average of approximately ten hours per week). The teacher liaison should be prepared to answer any questions students may have. If necessary, the coordinator should also be

available to discuss the program with interested students. In subsequent years, former interns can offer additional information to students.

Interested students should complete an application form (Appendix I) and submit it to the teacher liaison, who will then review it with the school guidance counselor until the strongest candidates are determined. Because there will be many more applicants than there are internships, a group of four to eight finalists should be chosen, depending on the number of internships assigned to a given high school. This group should then meet with the program coordinator so that the responsibilities and requirements of the program can be explained in more detail. Some students may realize at this time that the program is too demanding for them. With the assistance of the program coordinator, the teacher liaison and the guidance counselor should make the final selection of interns.

It is then the program coordinator's job to match students with legislators. Although in some cases one legislator may be willing to work with two interns, students and officials should generally be matched on a one-to-one basis. Before doing so, the coordinator should find out the student's political district and in what community issues or problems he or she is interested, and reciprocally, whether the officials would prefer to work with interns from their own district as well as on what committees they are serving. At the town or village level of government, the number of elected officials is fewer than at the county level, and students may work as interns with the whole governing board, rather than on a one-to-one basis. After assigning the interns to their sponsors in government, the coordinator should arrange an informal meeting so that they can get acquainted with each other before the first formal sessions.

Credit

Because of the amount of time and work that most students devote to their intern activities, it is recommended that they receive some academic credit and recognition for their participation in the program. The process for granting credit to the students will vary from school to school, as will the amount given. The teacher liaison should take responsibility for getting the school to grant credit for the program. If one school is willing to do so, all others should be encouraged to follow suit. The awarding of credit should depend on whether the intern sucessfully completes all the requirements of the program, e.g., regular attendance at meetings and seminars, a journal of activities, a project on some specific aspect of county or local government, and a report to other students on what they have learned. The amount of credit given has varied from one-half to two points. While most students who participate in the program aren't concerned about credit, the program must be given academic legitimacy if it is to appear on their official school record.

Program Organization

The internship experience gives students a chance to learn about the local government decision-making process through a variety of first-hand activities and observations. This program design encourages them to investigate, reflect upon, and discuss those issues and decisions which have immediate impact on the people in their community and allows them to become much more than passive learners. It is hoped that many students will later use the knowledge and skills they learned as interns to become vigorously involved in projects and activities that will contribute to the improvement of their communities.

The roles and responsibilities of the different participants in the internship program should be clear to everyone before the program starts. A useful tool for this purpose is the suggested list

of responsibilities included in Appendix III, and a copy should be given to everyone involved.

In particular, sponsoring officials play a unique role as the real teachers in this program. The importance of their commitment to working with an intern was discussed earlier. However, we would like to stress again here that, to be effective sponsors, officials should have especial patience in helping their interns understand the governmental process and should provide guidance and support as the students begin working on their projects. They must also keep their interns regularly informed of all pertinent committee and board meetings.

Role of Program Coordinator

The program coordinator is critical to the success of the program. Two of the main responsibilities of this person are to gain the cooperation of the schools and establish confidence in the program in all participants. The coordinator must fully inform everyone concerned about the program and be constantly aware of the needs and concerns of individuals from each of the groups involved.

The coordinator also serves as the trouble-shooter. All participants should understand that any problems they have should be discussed with him or her. Maintaining open communication among the different groups is important; by talking to individual interns about their experiences and meeting with teacher liaisons periodically to discuss the program, the coordinator can prevent potential problems from escalating. Participants should be regularly informed of all program meetings and activities.

In the beginning, the coordinator will spend much time working out the details of the program with the teacher liaisons, selecting the students, and matching them with sponsoring officials. Often one of the most difficult tasks for the official-student pairs at first is choosing an interesting and significant issue or problem for the intern to study as a term project. The coordinator can become an important resource person for project ideas and should try to meet individually with each official-student pair to suggest topics and sources of information.

It is also important for the coordinator to attend all of the scheduled meetings of the governing body since many of the issues discussed in them will be reviewed by interns in later seminars. Attending them also provides a good way of becoming better acquainted with the public officials and of observing them working together with their interns. The coordinator's presence at these sessions also reassures the officials that he or she is interested and aware of the intern's activities and is readily available for consultations.

Publicizing the program is another important responsibility of the coordinator. News releases should be submitted to the local media at appropriate times to insure that the community is properly informed of the program's activities and goals and knows that the project is educational in nature and not political.

Other coordinator responsibilities include planning and leading the orientation and seminar sessions, reviewing the interns' projects and journals during and at the end of the program, assisting them in planning ways to share their experience with others in their school, and completing an evaluation of each intern and of the program as a whole.

The program coordinator's job should be a half-time position for ten months of the year (September through June). Important qualifications for it include experience and knowledge of local government or community affairs, experience in working with high school students, and an ability to organize and work with both officials and school personnel.

Program Orientation

Three student orientation meetings are recommended at the start of the program. In addition, the coordinator should organize a tour of the county or municipality, as well as visits to the county courthouse, the city hall, or the local town or village offices, led by appropriate local officials.

The orientation sessions should provide the students with substantial background information about their county or municipality. Population, industrial development, land area, natural resources, and the various local government units should be discussed. Any local reports or publications, including a map of the county or municipality, covering these topics should be distributed to the interns at this time. It is the job of the coordinator to talk with representatives of the various departments of county and local government about their work and to obtain any printed material (usually available at the local planning office) that would be useful for the orientation sessions.

It will also be important to give the students an overview of the powers and duties of the area's different governmental bodies and to identify the range of services which local governments provide. The head of the community governing body might be invited to speak to the students on these topics. Also, before attending their first formal session, the students should obtain some specific preparation; for example, a sample agenda might be presented and discussed.

Part of the orientation sessions should be devoted to a review of the program's requirements and responsibilities and of the role of an intern. During orientation, a schedule of meetings and seminars for the entire semester should be given to the students along with information about other activities which might be of interest to them.

It is also important for the coordinator to meet with officials to review program requirements and to suggest ideas for intern assignments. This meeting could be conveniently arranged after a regular meeting of the governmental body. Having an intern will be a new experience for most officials, and some may therefore feel unsure about the kind of work the students can do and will welcome the assistance of the coordinator.

Formal Meetings

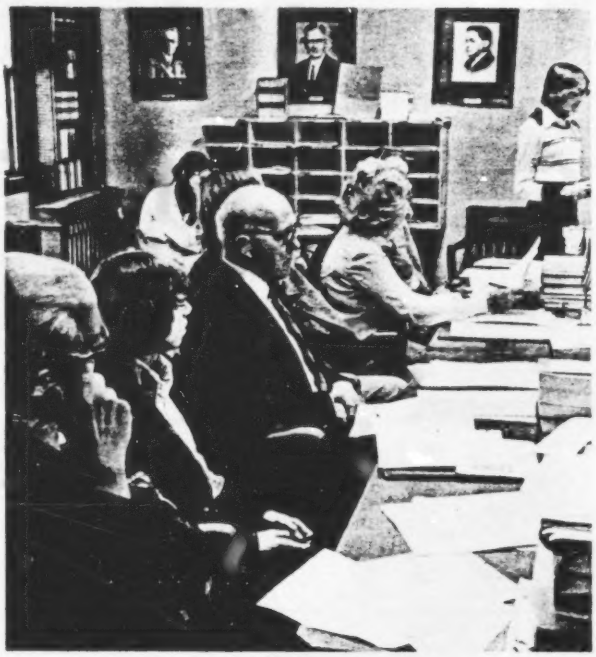
One of the main requirements of the program is that students attend the regular sessions of the governmental body. Interns should be allowed to sit next to or directly behind their officials to make it easy for them to hand copies of reports and resolutions to their interns and respond immediately to any questions they might pose during the course of a discussion. Where governing boards are smaller, this kind of arrangement may not be necessary. In those counties where sessions are held during the day, the coordinator should plan to meet with the interns during the lunch break to review the day's proceedings and answer any questions.

Interns are required to attend committee meetings with their official and any other appropriate meetings that are held in the evenings or on the day of the regular session. Officials should be sure to inform their interns whenever previously unscheduled meetings will occur. Committee meetings comprise an important part of the program, for it is in them that much of the decision making takes place. Some interns may be interested in attending other meetings such as planning and school boards on their own and schedules of them should be made available.

Intern Projects

The intern project should give students the opportunity to investigate a local problem or issue in some depth and to uncover information that may be useful to their legislators. This is why it is important that both parties give careful thought to the selection of an appropriate topic. By working on a specific project, interns have a chance to meet and talk with other public officials and professionals and, thus, to increase their knowledge of the structure and function of local government.

Students might undertake a wide range of projects; for instance, conducting research on a current issue, polling constituents on a particular local problem, responding to the public's questions and requests, or writing a constituent newsletter. Examples of projects that interns have



completed to date are: a solid waste study; surveys of community reactions to the Motor Vehicle Repair Shop Act, and of county transportation problems; research on mini-busses, and on adopting a county charter; a public awareness campaign for legal dumping areas; a study to improve community relations with the sheriff's department; and a film on how citizens can influence their elected officials.

Intern projects should be challenging but realistic and manageable in terms of the student's experience and time. Legislators should avoid broad, overly general assignments, such as a study of the county welfare system, which even a professional would regard as somewhat overwhelming. Interns can present the information they find in numerous ways other than presenting the traditional written report. The method used should depend on the nature of the project and the availability of audiovisual equipment and other resources. Students should be encouraged to work on group projects. These could consist of things like making a slide-tape or organizing a resource library in their school on local government, planning a community government day for younger students, organizing and conducting tours of the courthouse and other county facilities, or videotaping an interview with the mayor or county executive.

Journals

The purpose of the journal is to motivate students to organize and examine their observations on the local government process and on the various aspects of their personal internship experience. The process of writing down their thoughts throughout the program will help them to measure what they are learning and find out how their ideas about local government change as they themselves become more involved in it.

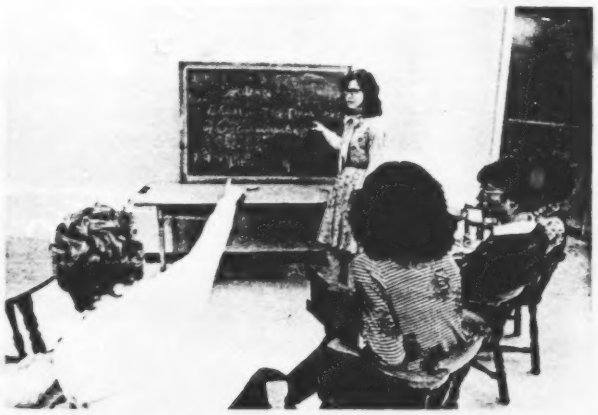
Students should get into the habit of recording their reactions to all meetings they attend during the program, as well as seminars and discussions with other local officials. Interns should be reminded that the journal is meant to be more than a list of all the resolutions discussed or all the questions raised at a session. It should instead contain all those questions and issues that they felt were most important and that helped them gain a clearer understanding of local government and additionally perhaps those that made them even more confused.

It is strongly recommended that the coordinator check the interns' journals on a regular basis throughout the program to insure that no one falls behind. The completed journals should be submitted to the coordinator at the end of the program.

Seminar Sessions

"The raw experience of internships is of little value to students unless it is processed through reflection and discussion."[2] This statement summarizes quite effectively the importance of seminars to the internship program. Scheduled at least twice a month, preferably during those weeks when there is no governmental session, these seminars are meant to provide students with the opportunity to share and reflect on their intern activities and to further explore and discuss different aspects of local government. Seminars also create a good opportunity to review current governmental business with the students, to raise questions about the implications of officials' views on certain issues, and to have the students discuss the status of their projects. Some interns may have suggestions or ideas that might be helpful to others who find themselves bogged down with their project.

2. "Internship Programs," *National Commission on Resources for Youth Newsletter* (Vol. 5, No. 2), p. 4.



The ideas and resources which the coordinator uses to plan these seminars will be important. He or she should never depend on the students to lead the seminar unless one has been assigned that responsibility in advance. A specific aspect of local government could be examined at each seminar. At times it will be appropriate to invite local officials who do not have interns to speak about their responsibilities. Following speeches, there should always be enough time reserved for students to ask questions. Other seminars should be devoted to problem-solving activities in which students are required to use the information they have acquired. Simulations or dramatizations of specific governmental functions can be effective teaching methods for these situations. The coordinator might also give the students short assignments that require them to learn more about their community and then report their findings to the group at another session. The seminar is also a good time for students to practice interview techniques and prepare pertinent questions.

In general, the success of the seminar depends on the resourcefulness of the coordinator. The materials listed in the appendix, together with locally available ideas and materials, should be quite helpful in planning these meetings.

Although the decision on whether to invite sponsoring officials should be left to the students, it is, as a rule, a good idea to have them attend the last seminar when the interns give a final presentation on their projects. This also furnishes a good opportunity for interns and officials to discuss as a group their experiences and reactions to the program.

Reporting Back to Schools

Because only a small group of students can participate in the program, it is important that interns have the opportunity to report back to other students and teachers in their schools what they have learned. The program coordinator, the teacher liaison, and the interns should arrange together how this might be done. For example, interns might present their experiences by speaking to each social studies class, serving as community government resource people in their schools, or planning a local government day for their high school in which officials are invited to discuss the issues, problems, and prospects of local government in their community.

Whatever approach is used, when the program is over, teachers, interns, and the coordinator should take stock of their recent experiences and develop improvements in the program for the next group of participants.

Instructional Materials

One of the reasons why local government is not a part of the regular social studies curriculum in most high schools is the lack of good, up-to-date, instructional materials on the subject. Nonetheless, many of the most useful materials can be found in your own county or municipality. The planning office, courthouse, local newspaper office, and local library are good places to begin searching for publications and reports helpful to understanding how the government process works in your community. Another very good source is the local chapter of the League of Women Voters. Many League branches publish excellent resource materials on local government that are written for the average citizen. These local chapters can also provide access to a variety of state and national League publications as well.

The resources listed in the appendix of this manual are inexpensive and provide a variety of

information and teaching activities to complement the students' internship experience.

Program Evaluation

The excitement of planning and organizing a new project often pushes thoughts of later evaluation into the background, but once the program is completed, many people will be asking how this experience affected the students, the officials, and the community. If the program is to continue, should it be changed in any way? For these reasons, it is extremely important that clear, measurable objectives be written during the planning stage so that they can be easily referred to when the program is over.

For example, one can determine how much and in what ways the students' factual knowledge about local government was increased by testing them both before they become interns and after the program is completed. Such specific questions as their progress in learning the names of local representatives, the different units and relationships of community government, and the responsibilities of the branch of government where they were interns, can be readily answered in this way.

A more difficult objective to measure is the students' ability to analyze a local problem and ascertain the best process for solving it. One useful evaluation procedure would be to ask an official to observe the intern group analyze and discuss a hypothetical problem until they arrive at a solution. The final seminar session is a good time for this kind of exercise.

For most students, the effects of the internship experience will not be immediate, and a long-term study would be necessary to determine whether the program increased their concern for and involvement in community problems. However, informal interviews with students, legislators, and teachers after the program is over should provide some indication of how attitudes toward local government and the role of youth in community affairs changed. Some suggested evaluation questions are included in Appendix IV.

The coordinator should take time at the beginning to ask officials and teachers what criteria they would recommend for determining the success of the program. This is very important as it is certain that these two groups will be influential in deciding whether the program should be continued. Two long-term objectives for the program are to have one or more high schools establish an elective course on local government with an internship component and to develop support for a permanent internship program in the community.

Program Expansion

If your area's internship program succeeds, you might want to consider giving students the chance to work with other kinds of government officials as well. The planning department, health department, and law enforcement agencies could provide excellent placement opportunities for student interns. However, since their responsibilities and working procedures are quite different from those of the policy-making bodies, special arrangements would have to be made.

Since many teachers do not know enough about local government to teach it in their classes, consideration should also be given to organizing an in-service program for teachers on the structure and workings of government in your area. Local officials, both elected and appointed, should be invited to participate.

Appendices

APPENDIX I

Local Government High School Internship Program

STUDENT APPLICATION

NAME _____
HOME ADDRESS _____
TELEPHONE _____ SCHOOL _____
TEACHER LIAISON _____

A. Please list school activities (sports, student council, clubs) and/or jobs with which you will be involved this semester.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

B. Why are you interested in becoming a local government intern?

C. In the light of your present class load, job, or activity responsibilities, how much time and effort do you feel you could contribute to this program each week?

1. _____ at least 5 hours
2. _____ 5 - 10 hours
3. _____ 10 - 15 hours

APPENDIX II

Current County and Local Government High School Internship Programs, New York State, 1976-77

County	*Coordinator*
Broome Youth in Local Government	Dan Hill/Dave Barnes Cooperative Extension 840 Front Street Binghamton, N.Y. 13905
Cattaraugus High School Legislative Internship Program	Jeffrey J. Simon County Government Coordinator BOCES, South Windfall Road Olean, N.Y. 14760
Chemung High School Legislative Internship Program	Suzanne Aigen Executive Director Horseheads Youth Bureau Horseheads, N.Y. 14845
Cortland Youth in Local Government	Tom Dumas Cooperative Extension 58 Port Watson Street Cortland, N.Y. 13045
Dutchess Legislative Apprentice Program	Dick Robinson Cooperative Extension Farm and Home Center Rt. 44 Millbrook, N.Y. 12545
Genesee Local Government Intern Program	Terry Gifford Cooperative Extension 420 E. Main Street Batavia, N.Y. 14020
Oneida 4-H Local Government Program	Mary Lou Brewer Cooperative Extension 1 Oxford Road New Hartford, N.Y. 13413

APPENDIX III

Responsibilties for Participants in Local Government Internship Programs

I. It should be the students' responsibility to:
1. Attend all sessions or board meetings each month
2. Attend at least two, and preferably more, committee meetings each month
3. Comply when asked to leave committee meetings in some cases, or not to attend certain committee meetings
4. Attend town or village board meetings with their legislator
5. Attend biweekly seminar meetings and complete related assignments
6. Try to provide enough assistance to officials to compensate them for their investment of time in instructing the intern
7. Keep a journal throughout their internship experience

8. Plan and carry out some form of report of what they have learned to other students
9. Make sure they have transportation. If they cannot arrange transportation by themselves or with their legislator, they should contact the coordinator.
10. Be punctual and reliable.

II. The sponsoring officials' responsibilities are to:
1. Assign responsibilities to their interns and plan a monthly schedule with them
2. Assure in advance that meetings the interns are scheduled to attend will be open to them, with the exception of unexpected agenda items
3. Assign responsibilities that provide interns with opportunities to learn about the role and functions of the governmental body and the structure and workings of local governments, keeping routine tasks or "busy work" to a minimum, and in general, only assigning things that they themselves would normally do if time permitted
4. Meet with their interns periodically to discuss their projects and other activities
5. Some suggested activities for interns are:
   a. Researching an issue under discussion (interns may need assistance locating sources and organizing findings)
   b. Polling constituents on an issue
   c. Organizing and maintaining a file of newspaper clippings
   d. Responding to constituents' questions and requests
   e. Taking notes on meetings for the official's personal use
   f. Searching out answers to specific questions raised by the official.

III. The teacher liaison should see that:
1. Specific arrangements for credit and release time are made with each participating school
2. Someone in the school take responsibility for assigning credit to interns
3. School personnel aid in the recruitment and selection process
4. Schools provide an appropriate opportunity for interns to report what they have learned to other students.

IV. The coordinator's responsibilities are to:
1. Serve as a liaison between the governmental body and the schools with regard to the internship project
2. Organize the biweekly seminars of interns
3. Assist students in planning and carrying out their report to other students
4. Talk to individual interns periodically to discuss their general feelings about the program and any problems or reservations they may have regarding their commitment to it
5. See that a program evaluation is conducted and reported to the governmental body and the schools in time to aid in deciding whether to continue the project
6. Complete an evaluation of each student's participation in the program.

APPENDIX IV

High School Internship Programs
In Local Government

Suggested Evaluation Questions

Questions for Interns:

1. Why were you interested in participating in this program?
2. What were your expectations when you joined it?
3. Which parts of the program did you like the most? The least?
4. Has this program made you become more or less interested in participating in local government?
5. Give some specific examples of the kinds of things you learned about local government through your experience.
6. Describe the role of an intern as you experienced it.
7. What do you think the role of an intern should be?
8. What did you know about local government before you became an intern?
9. If you had the opportunity to take part in this program again, would you still decide to do so?
10. Did you ever discuss your intern activities with other interns or other students in your school? Under what circumstances (i.e., formal presentation, casual conversation)?
11. How can a high school student become involved in local government even though he or she cannot run for office?
12. Although most of your time as an intern was spent observing sessions and committee meetings, you were situated in a real government setting. Some government pro-

grams involve students in simulated sessions (i.e., mock legislatures, youth in government). In your opinion, which kind of setting provides the most effective learning experience?

13. Should a local government course be offered at the high school? If so, how should it be taught?
14. Overall, what is your general impression of the program?
15. What changes, if any, do you recommend for this program?
16. In the future, on what basis should students be selected to participate in this program?

Questions for Officials:

1. Why were you interested in working with a student intern?
2. In what way did your intern assist you in your work as a local government official?
3. About how much time did you spend explaining the operation of local government to your intern?
4. Did you tend to ask for your intern's opinions on issues?
5. What was the strongest aspect of the program? The weakest?
6. What comments did you hear about this program from those officials who did not have interns?
7. What do you think the role of an intern should be?
8. Did any of your constituents comment on your having an intern?
9. What changes, if any, do you recommend for this program?
10. Would you be interested in working with another intern if this program were to continue?

APPENDIX V

Resource Materials on County and Local Government

1. Reports on various aspects of local government can easily be obtained at no cost from:
   Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations
   Washington, D. C. 20575
2. The purpose of the Cornell Local Government Program is to develop training and resource materials for elected officials and other personnel in county and local government. Many of these publications, however, contain basic information that can be used with high school students. A variety of materials are available, including reference guides to county, town, city, and village governments and training manuals on local legislative powers and duties, municipal budgeting, and planning and zoning boards. Write for information and a publications list to:
   Mr. Clark Hamlin, Director
   Local Government Program
   200 I.L.R. Extension
   Cornell University
   Ithaca, N.Y. 14853
3. Rothstein, Marilyn E. *What Every Citizen Should Know: A Guide to Local Government*, New York State Cooperative Extension: 4-H Community Development Program, 1976

   Book I: *Basic Structure of Local Government*
   This booklet contains twelve lessons on the basic structure of each unit of local government, including services, common problems, and methods for citizen action in local decision-making.

   Book II: *Local Budgeting*
   This booklet contains four lessons on the local budget process, including budget priorities, tax bills, and the citizen's role.

   Book III: *The Court System*
   This booklet contains four lessons covering arrest, arraignment, and trial procedure.

The purpose of these instructional materials is to impart a basic understanding of how local government works and provide students with the knowledge and skills to help them make it work better. Each booklet includes a discussion leader's guide and student handouts. The lessons contain short problem-solving activities that require students to actively participate in the learning process. Slide presentations on each unit of local government and videotapes of interviews with two city mayors are also available with this course.

These materials are inexpensive and are an excellent resource for internship program coordinators. An informational brochure and copies of the books can be obtained by writing:

Donald J. White
Community Resource Development Specialist
Cornell Regional Office
1215 Western Ave.
Albany, N.Y. 12203

4. *Career Opportunities in County Government*
This booklet outlines the qualifications and responsibilities for a variety of careers in local government. It can be obtained free by writing:

County Officers' Association of the State of New York
150 State St.
3rd Floor
Albany, N.Y. 12207

5. *Local Government: A Curriculum Guide,* 12 pp. $ .75
Community Research Techniques: How and Why, 47 pp. $1.75
County Government: A Curriculum Guide, 14 pp. $ .75
These and other teaching materials in government and politics are available from:

Institute for Political and Legal Education
Box 426
Glassboro-Woodbury Rd.
Pitman, N.J. 08071

6. *Factual Politics:*

Facts for a Change: Citizen Action Research for Better Schools, by Bill Burges $5.00

Words, Pictures, Media: Communication in Educational Politics, by Lloyd Prentice $4.00

Facts and Figures, A Layman's Guide to Conducting Surveys, by Bill Burges $4.00

You Can Look It Up: Finding Educational Documents $2.00

Collecting Evidence: A Layman's Guide to Participant Observation, by Joseph Ferreira and Bill Burges $2.00

Although the Institute for Responsive Education's primary purpose is to increase citizen participation in educational decision-making, these action-research materials can be valuable tools in learning how to find facts and present convincing evidence in support of many other community issues and concerns.

All five booklets in the *Factual Politics* series can be ordered as a set for $14.00 or individually by writing:

Institute for Responsive Education
704 Commonwealth Ave.
Boston, MA 02215

7. "Secondary School Education and Local Governments," *Management Information Service Report,* July, 1974, Volume 6, Number 7.

This is a comprehensive report on the need for teaching local government to high school students. It contains suggestions for how teachers and local officials can work together to develop action programs in local government for students; a thorough listing of up-to-date resource materials on local government, including films, pamphlets, simulation games, and books; and a suggested outline for a course in local government and urban problems. Copies can be obtained from:

International City Management Association
1140 Connecticut Ave., N.W.
Suite 201
Washington, D.C. 20036

8. "Internship Programs," *Resources for Youth Newsletter,* Volume V, Number II.

This issue of the *Newsletter,* published by the National Commission on Resources for Youth, is devoted to explaining the characteristics of a good internship program. Extensive information on a variety of youth community action projects, funding sources, and other reference materials is available from the National Commission.

The *Newsletter* is free and can be obtained by writing:

National Commission on Resources
for Youth
36 West 44th Street
New York, N.Y. 10036

9. "Youth Involvement in City Hall," *Nation's Cities*, March 1974. $1.00
Copies of this issue can be obtained by writing:

The National League of Cities
1620 I Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

"Guide to Career Opportunities in City Hall," *A Nation's Cities* reprint, 4 page pamphlet. $ .10

Copies of this pamphlet can be obtained by writing:

Nation's Cities Reprint Service
1620 I Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

10. Hahn, Alan J:

Who Decides? Participants in Community Decision Making, New York State Cooperative Extension, Information Bulletin 53. $ .15

How Are Community Decisions Made? The Decision Making Process, New York State Cooperative Extension, Information Bulletin 54. $ .15

How Well Are We Represented? Decision Makers and the Rest of the Community, New York State Cooperative Extension, Information Bulletin 55. $ .15

These bulletins are an excellent guide for young people who are observing and studying the local decision making process in their communities. When writing to the following address to obtain copies of these publications, be sure to indicate the numbers of the Information Bulletins you are requesting.

Mailing Room
Building 7
Research Park
Cornell University
Ithaca, N.Y. 14853

11. *Local Government Handbook*

This is an excellent reference guide to the history, organization, powers, and duties of local governments in New York State and their relationship with the State.
This handbook and several other resource materials including publications, pamphlets, and slide sets on a variety of local government topics can be obtained from the New York Department of State.

To obtain the *Handbook* and a publications list, write:

Publications Bureau
NYS Department of State
162 Washington Ave.
Albany, N.Y. 12231

12. Nader, Ralph and Ross, Donald. *Action for a Change, A Student's Manual for Public Interest Organizing*. New York: Grossman Publishers, 1972. $4.95

This book contains information on how high school students can organize public interest projects in their communities.

13. Torrence, Susan Walker. *Grass Roots Government, The County in American Politics*. New York: Robert B. Luce, Inc., 1974. $7.95

This is an excellent reference book on the structure and function of county government. It provides historical background and raises some of the crucial issues county governments are facing today.

14. *Community Decisions Games*

"Budget and Taxes," "Land Use," "Highway Planning," "New School" $4.95 each

These four simulation games are useful tools for stimulating discussion on these important local government issues. They can be obtained by writing:

Community Decisions Games
Education Ventures, Inc.
209 Court St.
Middletown, CT 06457

The Management Information Service Report, "Secondary School Education and Local Governments," cited above, contains a more complete bibliography of simulation games.

This community development project teaches students that government is a system that thrives through the commitment and work of many participants. It shows government, not as a textbook chart, but as a living process, a daily event that comes about from the efforts of many concerned persons.

4-H Community Development projects are designed to involve rural teenagers in community affairs. Projects such as local government internships give young people an opportunity to influence decisions affecting their community and make adults more receptive to the contributions young people can make.

For further information contact:

4-H Community Development Program
Department of Human Development and
Family Studies
N.Y. State College of Human Ecology
Cornell University
Martha Van Rensselaer Hall
Ithaca, New York 14853

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